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Title:

Opening Australian Hellenic Education and Progressive Association's conference

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2948 49.
OPENING AUSTRALIAN HELLENIC EDUCATION AND PROGRESSIVE ASSOCIATION'S
CONFERENCE.

4.10.76

MR. KIOSOGOLUS, MY LORD MAYOR, MY PARLIAMENTARY COLLEAGUE THE LEADER OF THE
OPPOSITION, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

IT'S A GREAT HONOUR FOR ADELAIDE TO BE THE HOST CITY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN
HELLENIC EDUCATIONAL PROGRESSIVE ASSOCIATION'S 1976 CONFERENCE, AND ON
BEHALF OF ALL SOUTH AUSTRALIANS I WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME OUR INTERSTATE
VISITORS. I'M SURE YOU WILL HAVE A MOST ENJOYABLE TIME WHILE YOU ARE HERE
WITH US: KNOWING THE HOSPITALITY AND GENEROSITY OF OUR GREEK COMMUNITY I
THINK YOU WILL REMEMBER YOUR ADELAIDE CONFERENCE FOR MANY YEARS.

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME AHEPA HAS HELD ITS CONFERENCE IN ADELAIDE, BECAUSE,
WHILE YOUR ORGANISATION HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN AUSTRALIA SINCE 1935, IT WAS NOT
UNTIL 1973 THAT AN AHEPA CHAPTER WAS FORMED IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA. WHILE OUR

.2

CHAPTER IS THE YOUNGEST MEMBER OF THE AHEPA FAMILY, IT IS A VERY HARD
WORKING AND ENTHUSIASTIC ADDITION. WITH THE DEDICATED SUPPORTERS WHICH THE
SOUTH AUSTRALIAN CHAPTER CAN RELY ON, I WASN'T SURPRISED WHEN JOHN
KIOSOGOLUS TOLD ME RECENTLY THAT THE CHAPTER MAY SOON BECOME A GRAND LODGE.
IN ONLY A SHORT TIME AHEPA'S MEMBERS HAVE DONE A MAGNIFICENT JOB IN BRINGING
TO THE ENTIRE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY THE SPIRIT AND OBJECTIVES OF THEIR
ASSOCIATION.

AS A RESULT, MORE SOUTH AUSTRALIANS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO LEARN OF THE TRADITIONS
AND CULTURE OF THE GREEK PEOPLE, AND THE WAY THAT HERITAGE HAS INFLUENCED
NOT ONLY AUSTRALIAN LIFE, BUT LIFE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

THE GREEK PEOPLE HAVE AN OUTSTANDING INTELLECTUAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL
TRADITION. SO MUCH OF THE ORGANISATION OF COMMUNITY LIFE TODAY IS BASED
ON PRECEPTS DEVELOPED IN GREEK CIVILISATIONS THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES THAT
IT IS EASY TO OVERLOOK A DEBT OF THIS SIZE. ALL SOCIETIES HAVE BENEFITTED

FROM GREEK LANGUAGE, ART, LITERATURE, POLITICAL THOUGHT AND MANY OTHER ASPECTS OF THE HELLENIC HERITAGE, NOT ONLY BY IMITATION AND ADAPTATION, BUT THROUGH THE INFLUENCE OF GREEK MIGRATION, AGAIN OVER THE CENTURIES.

AUSTRALIA OWES A GREAT DEAL TO THE GREEK PEOPLE WHO HAVE MADE THIS COUNTRY THEIR NEW HOME, AND OUR STATE, IN PARTICULAR, HAS GAINED MUCH FROM THE IMPACT OF OUR GREEK COMMUNITY. THROUGHOUT SOUTH AUSTRALIA GREEK PEOPLE HAVE JOINED IN WITHOUT HESITATION AND MADE THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STATE.

THEY HAVE BECOME FARMERS, STARTED THEIR OWN BUSINESSES, WORKED IN INDUSTRY AND MADE A GREAT CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROFESSIONS. IN EVERYTHING THEY HAVE DONE, THE GREEK PEOPLE IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA HAVE NOT SPARED THEIR SKILLS AND ENERGY.

.4

WHILE THEY HAVE BEEN HELPING TO ENRICH AUSTRALIA PHYSICALLY, THEY HAVE ADDED GREAT RICHNESS TO OUR SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE AS WELL. THE GREEK COMMUNITY HAS KEPT ITS HELLENIC TRADITIONS, AND HAS SHARED THEM WITH ALL AUSTRALIANS.

FOR TOO LONG HOWEVER, THE READINESS OF GREEK PEOPLE TO GIVE THEIR NEW COUNTRY THE BENEFITS OF THEIR HOMELAND WAS TREATED WITH SUSPICION OR HOSTILITY BY MANY AUSTRALIANS. THERE WAS A VERY STRONG ATTITUDE IN THIS COUNTRY DURING THE LARGE SCALE MIGRATION OF THE FIFTIES AND SIXTIES, THAT ONCE A FAMILY CAME TO AUSTRALIA THEY SHOULD FORGET THEIR ORIGINS, THEIR HERITAGE, THEIR PAST AND CONCENTRATE ON BECOMING PART OF AN AMORPHOUS AUSTRALIA.

THAT ATTITUDE IS CHANGING. MOST AUSTRALIANS NOW REALISE THAT WE ARE A NATION OF DIVERSE ETHNIC AND CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS AND THAT WE ALL GAIN FROM THAT DIVERSITY.

ORGANISATIONS SUCH AS AHEPA HAVE HELPED BRING ABOUT THAT AWARENESS BY SHOWING THE COMMUNITY THE WEALTH OF OUR ETHNIC HERITAGES AND THEIR RELEVANCE, INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY, TO AUSTRALIAN LIFE.

ALTHOUGH AT TIMES THE TASK HAS SEEMED FORMIDABLE AND THE PROGRESS IMPERCEPTIBLE, THE CHANGE OF ATTITUDES OVER THE LAST TEN YEARS HAS BEEN QUITE STARTLING. AUSTRALIAN FAMILIES NOW ENJOY GOING TO RESTAURANTS WHICH SPECIALISE IN NATIONAL FOODS, THEY ARE BUYING HOMES WHICH HAVE BEEN INFLUENCED BY EUROPEAN ARCHITECTURE AND THEY ARE WEARING CLOTHES WHICH HAVE BEEN DESIGNED BY PEOPLE WHO HAVE COME TO AUSTRALIA FROM OTHER COUNTRIES.

WE ARE NOW A MORE TOLERANT AND MORE APPRECIATIVE SOCIETY, ALTHOUGH THE OLD ATTITUDES HAVE NOT DISAPPEARED. BUT AS A TOTAL SOCIETY, THE PRESSURES IN AUSTRALIA ARE NOT FOR ANONYMOUS INTEGRATION AND THE SUPPRESSION OF INDIVIDUALITY. IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENTS TO REFLECT THAT FACT AND TO ENSURE THAT GOVERNMENT SERVICES PROVIDE EQUALLY FOR ALL CITIZENS,

.6

INCLUDING THOSE FROM NATIONAL MINORITIES.

OUR SCHOOLS SHOULD HAVE CURRICULA WHICH RECOGNISE THAT NOT ALL CHILDREN COME FROM ANGLO-SAXON BACKGROUNDS AND WE MUST HAVE TEACHERS WHO CAN NOT ONLY WORK IN OTHER LANGUAGES BUT HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING OF AND FEELING FOR THE INFLUENCES OF VARIOUS CULTURES.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES MUST BE ADVERTISED IN MANY LANGUAGES, AND THE INTERPRETING FACILITIES NEED TO BE READILY AVAILABLE IN SITUATIONS WHERE GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS HAVE A FRONT COUNTER SITUATION. AT THE POINT WHERE A PERSON FIRST CONFRONTS THE WORKINGS OF THE BUREAUCRACY, THERE SHOULD BE SOMEONE ABLE TO HELP THOSE FOR WHOM ENGLISH DOES NOT COME NATURALLY OR FLUENTLY.

AS WELL AS THESE ESSENTIAL ~~IMMEDIATE~~ IMPROVEMENTS, AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY, THROUGH THE FEDERAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS MUST BE MORE PREPARED TO HELP SOLVE PROBLEMS OF A MORE SOCIOLOGICAL NATURE WHICH ARISE AS THE TRADITIONS AND VALUES OF ONE COUNTRY ARE ERODED OR ALTERED AFTER BEING TRANSPLANTED IN THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE NEW COUNTRY.

THE CARE OF OLD PEOPLE IN ETHNIC COMMUNITIES, THE SETTING UP OF FULL TIME ETHNIC RADIO AND THE SUPPORT OF COMMUNITY CENTRES FOR NATIONAL GROUPS ARE AREAS WHERE AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY MUST BE PREPARED TO ASSIST.

IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA, THE GOVERNMENT HAS MADE MANY IMPROVEMENTS FOR ETHNIC GROUPS. WE HAVE PROVIDED INTERPRETER FACILITIES WITHIN GOVERNMENT, AND WE HAVE ENSURED THAT GOVERNMENT INFORMATION IS, WHERE POSSIBLE, TRANSLATED AND PRINTED IN SEVERAL LANGUAGES. OUR CONSUMER PROTECTION INFORMATION IN PARTICULAR, IS GIVEN SPECIAL ATTENTION SO THAT ALL THE CONSUMERS IN THE COMMUNITY ARE GIVEN THE SAME ASSISTANCE.

SPECIAL COURSES HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED IN OUR SCHOOLS TO HIGHLIGHT THE DIFFERENT CULTURAL STRANDS IN AUSTRALIA TODAY AND OUR TEACHER TRAINING METHODS NOW INCLUDE TEACHING IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES.

MY GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN DETERMINED THAT THE IMPROVEMENTS WE HAVE MADE IN THE LIVES OF SOUTH AUSTRALIANS SHOULD BE SHARED BY EVERYONE IN THE COMMUNITY.

WE WANT THE ETHNIC COMMUNITIES TO BE VITAL COMPONENTS IN OUR SOCIETY. SOUTH AUSTRALIA HAS A LONG HISTORY OF MIGRANT GROUPS SETTLING HERE AND ADDING TO THE CHARACTER OF THE STATE WITH THEIR CUSTOMS AND SKILLS. THE GERMANS WHO FLED HERE TO ESCAPE PERSECUTION, AND THE CORNISH WHO CAME TO MINE COPPER AND GOLD LAST CENTURY STARTED A TRADITION WHICH HAS BEEN REPEATED THIS CENTURY ESPECIALLY AFTER 1945.

THEY HAVE ALL CONTRIBUTED TO MAKING OUR STATE UNIQUE, AND THE GREEK COMMUNITY HAS MORE THAN PLAYED ITS PART, AND MY GOVERNMENT HAS ALWAYS APPRECIATED THE ADVICE AND SUPPORT OF THE GREEK PEOPLE.

WE WERE VERY PLEASED WHEN THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN CHAPTER OF AHEPA WAS FORMED,
AND WERE DELIGHTED AT ITS SUCCESS AND ENTHUSIASM.

THIS CONFERENCE WILL, I AM SURE, GIVE IT EVEN MORE ENCOURAGEMENT IN ITS TASK
OF GIVING MORE SOUTH AUSTRALIANS A BETTER APPRECIATION OF THE GREEK PEOPLE,
AND ALSO TO REPRESENT THE GREEK PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE.

IT HAS BEEN A PLEASURE TO SPEAK TO YOU THIS MORNING AND TO OPEN YOUR
CONFERENCE.